

Message Text

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47

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10 /078 W

----- 119666

R 240031Z OCT 75

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3032

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E O 11652 N A

TAGS ELAB, AS

SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN TRADE UNIONS PLAN ACTION DURING POLITICAL CRISIS

1. SPECIAL MEETING OF NATIONAL EXECUTIVE OF AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS (ACTU) HELD IN MELBOURNE OCT 23 ANNOUNCED THAT IT SUPPORTED GOVT IN PRESENT POLITICAL CRISIS AND WOULD TAKE ACTION, POSSIBLY INCLUDING STRIKES, IN SUPPORT OF ITS POSITION.

2. ACTU PRESIDENT, BOB HAWKE, IN STATEMENT AT END OF MEETING EMPHASIZED THAT TRADE UNION ACTION WAS PRIMARILY WARNING TO PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION LEADER, MALCOLM FRASER, THAT UNIONS CONSIDERED WITHHOLDING MONEY FROM GOVT OPERATION WAS POTENTIAL DANGER TO NATIONAL ECONOMY. HAWKE RESISTED PERSISTENT QUESTIONING FROM REPORTERS WHO ATTEMPTED TO ELICIT STATEMENT FROM TRADE UNION LEADER IN SUPPORT OF STRIKES AND VIOLENCE. HAWKE EMPHASISED THAT STRIKE ACTION WAS NOT PRIMARY PURPOSE OF SPECIAL EXECUTIVE MEETING,
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BUT DID NOT RULE OUT POSSIBILITY OF UNIONS TAKING

INDUSTRIAL ACTION TO WITHHOLD LABOUR IN RETALIATION FOR
OPPOSITION WITHHOLDING SUPPLY.

3. COMMENT: HAWKE IN FIERY SPEECH OUTSIDE CANBERRA PARLIAMENT
HOUSE SEVEN DAYS AGO CAME DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO THREATS OF
VIOLENCE FROM WORKERS IF LIBERAL/COUNTRY PARTY COALITION
CONTINUED TO FRUSTRATE GOVT SUPPLY BILLS. SINCE THAT
TIME HAWKE HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING TO TAKE BACK WHAT HE INSISTS
IS MISINTERPRETATION OF HIS REMARKS. STATEMENTS OF
OCT 23 ARE YET ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO BRING SOME ORDER AND
CONTROL IN SO FAR UNCO-ORDINATED TRADE UNION ACTIONS IN
SUPPORT OF GOVT. LABATT DOUBTS THAT GENERAL STRIKE
HINTED AT IN MEDIA WILL EVENTUATE, BUT SOME PUBLIC
DEMONSTRATIONS AIMED AT INDIVIDUAL LEADERS AMONG POLITICAL
OPPOSITION APPEAR INEVITABLE. SEPARATE ACTIONS BY SEVERAL
STATE ORGANISATIONS, NOTABLY QUEENSLAND AND VICTORIA,
INDICATE THAT HAWKE'S CONTROL MAY BE DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN.
MILITANT LEADERS OF SOME COMMUNIST-DOMINATED LOCAL UNIONS
WILL UNDOUBTEDLY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PRESENT SITUATION TO
DEEPEN CONFUSION AND VITIATE STRENGTH OF MODERATES, BOTH
IN LABOR PARTY AND TRADE UNION GROUPS.

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